

**In the Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A nucleic acid of SEQ ID NO:3, wherein least one of the codons of amino acids selected from the group consisting of codons at positions 3, 5 and 6 is CGT and wherein further the amino acid at position 1 is methionine and the amino acid at position 2 is serine, wherein the nucleic acid additionally comprises at least amino acids 32-207 of SEQ ID NO:3.
2. (Previously Amended) The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein the codons of amino acids at positions 3, 5 and 6 are CGT.
3. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of  $\alpha$ -chain of hepatocyte growth factor or an N-terminal fragment thereof (NK polypeptide) comprising the steps of a) expression of a nucleic acid of SEQ ID NO:3 encoding said NK polypeptide in a microbial host cell ; b) ~~isolating~~ isolating of inclusion bodies containing said NK polypeptide in denatured ~~from~~ form; c) solubilizing the inclusion bodies; and d) renaturing (naturation) of the denatured NK polypeptide, wherein in said nucleic acid at least one of the ~~codons~~ codons of amino acids selected from the group consisting of codons at positions 3, 5 and 6 is CGT and wherein further the amino acid at position 1 is methionine and the amino acid at position 2 is serine, wherein the nucleic acid additionally comprises at least amino acids 32-207 of SEQ ID NO:3.
4. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the codons of amino acids at positions 3, 5 and 6 are CGT.
5. (Currently Presented) A nucleic acid encoding the  $\alpha$ -chain of hepatocyte growth factor of SEQ ID NO:2 or an N-terminal fragment of SEQ ID NO:2, wherein in said nucleic acid at least one of the codons of amino acids selected from the group consisting of codons at positions 2, 4 and 5 is CGT , wherein further the nucleic acid additionally comprises at least amino acids 32-207 of SEQ ID NO:2.

6. (Previously Presented) The nucleic acid of claim 5, wherein the codons of amino acids at positions 2, 4 and 5 are CGT.